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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 003651

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SUBJECT: JORDAN'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION RESULTS:
INDEPENDENT PRO-GOVERNMENT CANDIDATES WIN LARGE MAJORITY

REF: AMMAN 3612

Classified By: PolCouns Doug Silliman for reasons 1.5 (B) (D)

SUMMARY

1. (C) An estimated 1.3 million Jordanians voted in the parliamentary elections June 17, out of 2.3 million registered voters. Surprisingly, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, won only 18 seats, fewer than analysts' predictions of 20-25 seats. Results indicate that voter turnout in rural areas and small villages was much higher than in Amman. The national voter turnout was 59 percent, with Karak reporting 82 percent, Irbid 68 percent and Amman 45 percent. No women candidates won regular seats, and the winners of the 6 women's seats appear to be conservative and tribal. End Summary.

VOTER TURNOUT HIGH IN NORTH AND SOUTH, LOWER IN AMMAN

2. (C) Official results show that Jordanians in the north and south of the country and in rural areas and villages turned out in greater numbers to vote than their counterparts in Amman. While an official spokesman described the turnout as "relatively good" when compared to 1997's 54 per cent participation, turnout did not surpass the levels of the 1993 and 1989 elections (69 and 62 percent respectively). The lower turnout in the 1997 elections is attributed to the IAF's boycott of elections to protest the one man, one vote elections law.

IAF PERFORMANCE

3. (C) Surprisingly, although many analysts had predicted that the IAF would win 20-25 seats, only 18 IAF candidates won (including one of the six women's seats--see paragraph 4 below). There is speculation that other independent candidates may also identify themselves with the IAF once the parliament is in session. The IAF complained that many fully veiled women (faces covered except for eyes) had been asked to expose their faces to male election officials to verify their identities and had chosen not to vote. (Note: None of the 20 observers from various embassies witnessed a fully veiled woman choose not to vote).

WOMEN CANDIDATES

4. Despite hope that some of the 54 women candidates would win parliamentary seats outright, official results showed that none of the winners of regular seats were women. The six seats reserved for women will be filled by two women from Tafileh, one from Irbid, one from Karak, one from Madaba, and an IAF candidate from Zarqa. There was deep disappointment in Amman that the capital will not have a woman representative in parliament. Analysts expect the six female winners will hold conservative beliefs.

COMMENT

5. The official results confirm that the parliament will have a substantial pro-government majority. As mentioned reftel, this majority will be tribal, conservative, and pro monarchy in its orientation. That no women won seats outright and that the capital will not have any female representative in the parliament has highlighted how far women have yet to go to be fully incorporated into Jordanian political life.

GNEHM